

**SUMMARY OF THE  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
JANUARY 12, 1999**

The On-Site Assessment Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met on Tuesday, January 12, 1999, at 1:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST) as part of the Fourth NELAC Interim Meeting in Bethesda, Maryland. The meeting was led by its chair, Mr. Steven D. Baker of the Arizona Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a proposed change to the standard and issues related to assessor checklists and assessor training.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Following an explanation of the ground rules by the meeting facilitator, Mr. Owen Crankshaw, and a welcome by Mr. Baker, the members of the committee introduced themselves. Mr. Baker pointed out the committee's one proposed change to the standard and briefly highlighted the agenda.

**COMMENTS ON PROPOSED CHANGE TO THE STANDARD**

There was minimal discussion of the proposed change in Section 3.3.2 from 45 to 30 days for completion of follow-up assessments. One participant expressed the opinion that 30 days is not long enough, while a second participant expressed the desire for a provision for a laboratory to recall an assessor even sooner in order to regain accredited status.

**DISCUSSION OF CHECKLISTS**

Standardized assessor checklists should be posted on the EPA Website by March 1, 1999. The checklists will be a part of the training manual rather than the standard. They are offered as a way to provide consistency between assessors and States, and are intended to be used as guidance for the assessor rather than as a crutch. The committee stressed that the method-specific checklists developed for posting are intended only as a starting point and encouraged the submission of written comments on the checklists after they are posted on the web. These comments should be submitted to Mr. Baker.

Subsequent discussion of method-specific checklists ensued. A participant suggested that, consistent with the tiered approach outlined in Chapter 1, only three checklists are necessary for the auditor. These checklists would verify that:

- 1) any method-defined parameters are met
- 2) any more stringent QC required by a mandated test method is met
- 3) Chapter 5 Quality Systems checklists are met

The committee noted that, since there still exist several mandated test methods, it is difficult to develop assessor checklists that do not incorporate method-specific parameters. Mr. Baker noted that there is some division on the issue of method-specific versus performance-based checklists. A State regulatory participant questioned the requirement of the 72-page Quality Systems checklist in Chapter 5. In response, Ms. Elizabeth Dutrow, NELAC Executive Secretary, noted that the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) will not require the States to use the actual Chapter 5 checklist during audits but rather, NELAP will require either that each State verify its use of the checklist or demonstrate how it will ensure laboratories meet the requirements of the checklist.

#### **STATUS OF PERFORMANCE-BASED MEASUREMENT SYSTEMS (PBMS)**

Discussion of PBMS overlapped somewhat with discussion of checklists. It was suggested that PBMS does not focus on technology but on data. In response Mr. Baker commented that an ideal audit is a nice mix of systems and data. A participant noted that the critical stakeholder in the assessment process is the end data user, and questioned how the committee is assuring the technical defensibility of data for the end user client who pays for the analysis.

#### **TRAINING COURSES: BASIC LABORATORY ASSESSOR TRAINING**

The committee directed attendees' attention to the outlines for the NELAC Basic Assessor Training Course and the seven discipline-specific technical training courses presented in Section 3.2.3. They stressed that these course outlines are subject to change and solicited comments on the training courses. Moderate discussion of the basic training course ensued. A participant suggested that the committee must first determine the content and scope of the site visit in order to develop training courses for assessors. Since standardized checklists drive the content of the site visit, checklist issues should be defined up-front. The committee responded that this issue is more applicable to the technical courses than to the basic training course. Since the basic training course is defined by the standard, it should be ready for relatively quick development. There was some discussion of the time line outlined for the basic course. The committee requested the submission of written comments on this issue.

#### **TRAINING COURSES: DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC TRAINING**

Mr. Baker noted the differences between the disciplines covered by the discipline-specific technical training courses and also noted that the course outlines are preliminary. A discipline such as microbiology, for which a limited number of methods exists, may favor a method-based audit approach. The proposed microbiology course outline included in the conference packet is identical to that of the existing Cincinnati microbiology course for drinking water analysis. A discipline such as organic analysis, for which a large number of methods exists, may favor a quality systems audit approach. Mr. Baker quoted from Article I of the NELAC constitution that **A**the purpose of the organization is to foster the generation of environmental laboratory data of known and documented quality.<sup>@</sup> The proposed organic training course outline included in the conference packet incorporates the use of data packets. The committee pointed out that assessor

training is driven by the policy as it is now written. This policy is that the laboratory will be accredited by method and by analyte.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion the committee noted that they have received few comments over the past five years on the issue of assessor training. The proposed course outlines consist of the committee's best guess regarding scope and content. They urged participants to submit written comments on the course outlines in order to flesh them out.

**ACTION ITEMS  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
JANUARY 12, 1999**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1.	Committee to wordsmith proposed change to the standard	March 1, 1999
2.	Committee to post all checklists in draft form on the NELAC web page for comments	March 1, 1999
3.	Committee to propose amended checklists in response to comments received on posted drafts	NELAC V
4.	Committee to post additional technical training course outlines on the NELAC web page	March 1, 1999
5.	Committee to explore/decide basic training course issues (cost, date, provider, certification by RAB, location)	NELAC V
6.	Committee to explore/decide technical training course issues (cost, structure of courses, date and provider, certification by RAB)	NELAC V

**PARTICIPANTS  
ON-SITE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE MEETING  
JANUARY 12, 1999**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Address</b>
Baker, Steven Chair	AZ Dept of Health Svcs, Lab Lic. & Cert.	T: (602) 255 - 3454 F: (602) 255 - 3462 E: sbaker@hs.state.az.us
Buhl, Rosanna	Battelle Ocean Sciences	T: (781) 952 - 5309 F: (781) 934 - 2124 E: buhl@battelle.org
Davis, R. Wayne	SC Dept. of Health and Env Cntl	T: (803) 935 - 7025 F: (803) 935 - 6859 E: davisrw@columb36.dhec.state.sc.us
Dyer, Charles	NH Dept of Environmental Services	T: (603) 271 - 2991 F: (603) 271 - 2867 E: c_dyer@des.state.nh.us
Hall, Jack	Quanterra, Inc.	T: (423) 588 - 6401 F: (423) 584 - 4315 E: hallj@quanterra.com
Morton, J. Stan (absent)	U.S. Dept of Energy - Idaho Operations Office	T: (208) 526 - 2186 F: (208) 526 - 5964 E: mortonjs@lnel.gov
Patillo, Marlene	MD Dept of the Environment	T: (410) 631 - 3646 F: (410) 631 - 3733 E: mpatillo@mde.state.md.us
Steinke, Athene	EA Laboratories	T: (410) 771 - 4920 F: (410) 771 - 4407 E: asteinke@eaest.com
Toth, William	Worldwide Solutions for Tomorrow	T: (301) 668 - 0499 F: (301) 924 - 4594 E: btoth@erols.com
Wilson, Kelly	CT&E Environmental Services, Inc.	T: (616) 843 - 1877 F: (616) 845 - 9942 E: tviers@voyager.net
Crankshaw, Owen (Contractor Support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: (919) 541 - 7470 F: (919) 541 - 7386 E: osc@rti.org
Greene, Lisa (Contractor Support)	Research Triangle Institute	T: (919) 541 - 7483 F: (919) 541 - 7386 E: lcg@rti.org